



Welcome to the LSA Institute at UC Davis and the Acquisition of Semantics!
Classroom: Olson Room 267
Meeting Day/Times: Tuesdays/Fridays 2:40-4:05 pm

Course Learning Goals

In this class, we will explore a range of topics covered under the umbrella of 'Acquisition of Semantics.'

As we explore these topics, you will

- gain an appreciation of the challenges faced by young children in the course of language development as they acquire word meaning and assign interpretations to larger structures
- understand the connection between linguistic theory and research in language acquisition
- get familiarized with some of the major contributions to this subarea of Linguistic research
- become acquainted with the main methodologies used to assess children's semantic competence
- see how semantics, syntax, pragmatics, cognition, and conceptual development are interrelated
- develop your own final project based on the topics and methodologies covered

Course Expectations

You are required to attend and participate in every class and to complete the two components of the final project (proposal and project). You will not be expected to actually run any experiments as part of your final project. No late work will be accepted. You are expected to arrive on time for class.

Grade components

50%	Attendance and Participation
20%	Final Project Proposal
30%	Final Project

Disabilities

If you have a documented learning disability or other situation that will impact your presence in the classroom, please let the instructors know so that we may support your learning.

Academic Integrity

Your final project proposal and final project must be your own. You may talk to each other about ideas (and are encouraged to do so to promote an atmosphere of collegiality and collaboration!), but you are responsible for your own work. If you had conversations with other students that led to your final project idea and/or implementation, you should acknowledge their intellectual contribution accordingly.

Civility and Inclusion

In this class, we are supportive of each other, and welcome diverse opinions, backgrounds, and perspectives. We expect that respect for each other will be reflected in our classroom discussions and in any online correspondence, and that all participants (registered or not) will be guided by professionalism, civility, and inclusion.



Course Topics and Schedule

Class Meeting	Topic	Methodology Spotlight	Optional Readings
Tuesday 6/25	Introduction, Word Learning	n/a	Syrett (2018); Clark (2018)
Friday 6/28	Adjectives	Scalar Judgments, Presupposition Assessment	Syrett et al. (2006); Syrett, Kennedy, & Lidz (2010); Syrett (2015); Barner & Snedeker (2008)
Tuesday 7/2	Comparatives	Act-out Task, Truth Value Judgment, Corpus Searching	Gor & Syrett (2015); Arii, Syrett, & Goro (2017); Syrett (2016); Hohaus, Tiemann, & Beck (2014)
Friday 7/5	Plurals, Definiteness	Question-Answer Response	Caponigro et al. (2012); Simon-Pearson & Syrett (2018)
Tuesday 7/9	Verb Learning, Syntactic Bootstrapping	Preferential Looking, Human Simulation Paradigm	Gleitman (1990); Gleitman et al. (2005); Gillette et al. (1999); Hacquard & Lidz (2019)
Friday 7/12	Quantifier Raising, Scope	Truth Value Judgment Task	Lidz & Musolino (2002); Musolino & Lidz (2006); Syrett & Lidz (2009); Gualmini et al. (2008); Syrett (2015)
Tuesday 7/16	Scalar implicatures	Ternary Judgment; Acceptability Judgment; Reference	Katsos & Bishop (2011); Foppolo et al. (2012); Skordos & Papafragou (2016); Stiller et al. (2015)
Friday 7/19	Collectivity, Distributivity	Forced Choice Preference, Truth Value Judgment	Syrett & Musolino (2013, 2016); Musolino (2009)

*Not being covered in this class for reasons of space/time: disjunction, generics, indefinites



Optional Readings (read at your leisure, no knowledge presupposed!)

(Attached to announcements within the course sessions on Orbund)

Class 1: Introduction

- Syrett, K. The historical emergence and current study of semantics in acquisition. In Syrett, K. & Arunachalam, S. (Eds.), *Semantics in Language Acquisition, Trends in Language Acquisition (TiLAR) Series* (pp. 1-18). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Clark, Eve V. (2018). Word meanings and semantic domains in acquisition. In Syrett, K. & Arunachalam, S. (Eds.), *Semantics in Language Acquisition, Trends in Language Acquisition (TiLAR) Series* (pp. 21-43). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Class 2: Adjectives

- Syrett, Kristen, Bradley, Evan, Kennedy, Christopher, & Lidz, Jeffrey. (2006). Shifting standards: Children's understanding of gradable adjectives. In Kamil Ud Deen, Jun Nomura, Barbara Schulz, & Bonnie D. Schwartz (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Inaugural Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition – North America, Honolulu, HI, Vol. 2* (pp. 353-364). Cambridge, Mass: Uconn Occasional Papers in Linguistics 4.
- Syrett, K., Kennedy, C., & Lidz, J. (2010). Meaning and context in children's understanding of gradable adjectives. *Journal of Semantics*, 27, 1-35.
- Syrett, Kristen. (2015). Mapping properties to individuals in language acquisition. In Elizabeth Grillo and Kyle Jepson (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 39th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 398-410). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Barner, David, & Snedeker, Jesse. (2008). Compositionality and statistics in adjective acquisition: 4-year-olds interpret *tall* and *short* based on the size distributions of novel noun referents. *Child Development*, 79, 594-608.

Class 3: Comparatives

- Gor, Vera, & Syrett, Kristen. (2015). Picking up after sloppy children: What pronouns reveal about children's analysis of English comparative constructions. In Elizabeth Grillo and Kyle Jepson (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 39th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 191-203). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Arii, Tomoe, Syrett, Kristen, & Goro, Takuya. (2017). Investigating the form-meaning mapping in the acquisition of English and Japanese measure phrase comparatives. *Natural Language Semantics*, 25, 53-90.
- Syrett, Kristen. (2016). Comparatives and degree constructions. In J. Lidz, W. Snyder, & J. Pater (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Developmental Linguistics* (pp. 463-497). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hohaus, Vera, Tiemann, Sonja, & Beck, Sigrid. (2014). Acquisition of comparison constructions. *Language Acquisition*, 21, 215-249.

Class 4: Plurals, Definiteness

- Caponigro, Ivano, Pearl, Lisa, Brooks, Neon, & Barner, David. (2012). Acquiring the meaning of free relative clauses and plural definite descriptions. *Journal of Semantics*, 29, 261-293.
- Simon-Pearson, Laura, & Syrett, Kristen. (2018). Assessing truth and speaker knowledge when utterances are not maximally true. In Anne B. Bertolini and Maxwell J. Kaplan (Eds.), *Proceedings of*

Moyer, Morgan, Husnain, Zehra, & Syrett, Kristen. (2019). Won't somebody think of the children? Beyond maximality with plural definite descriptions. *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*.



Class 5: Verb Learning, Syntactic Bootstrapping

Gleitman, Lila R. (1990). Structural sources of verb learning. *Language Acquisition*, 1, 1-63.

Gleitman, Lila R., Cassidy, Kimberly, Nappa, Rebecca, Papafragou, Anna, & Trueswell, John C. (2005). Hard words. *Language Learning and Development*, 1, 23-64.

Gillette et al. (1999)

Hacquard, Valentine & Lidz, Jeffrey. (2019). Children's attitude problems: Bootstrapping verb meaning from syntax and pragmatics. *Mind and Language*, 34, 73-96.

Class 6: Quantifier Raising, Scope

Lidz, Jeffrey, & Musolino, Julien. (2002). Children's command of quantification. *Cognition*, 84, 113-154.

Musolino, Julien, & Lidz, Jeffrey. (2006). Why children aren't universally successful with quantification. *Linguistics*, 44, 817-852.

Syrett, Kristen, & Lidz, Jeffrey. QR in child grammar: Evidence from Antecedent-Contained Deletion. *Language Acquisition: A Journal of Developmental Linguistics*, 16, 67-81.

Gualmini, Andrea, Hulse, Sarah, Hacquard, Valentine, & Fox, Danny. (2008). The question-answer requirement for scope assignment. *Natural Language Semantics*, 16, 205-237.

Syrett, Kristen. (2015). QR out of a tensed clause: Evidence from Antecedent-Contained Deletion. *Ratio Special issue: Investigating Meaning* (Ed. by N. Hansen and E. Borg), 28, 395-421.

Class 7: Scalar Implicatures

Katsos, Napoleon, & Bishop, Dorothy. (2011). Pragmatic tolerance: Implications for the acquisition of informativeness and implicature. *Cognition*, 120, 67-81.

Foppolo, Francesca, Guasti, Maria Teresa, & Chierchia, Gennaro. (2012). Scalar implicatures in child language: Give children a chance. *Language Learning and Development*, 8, 365-394.

Skordos, Dimitrios, & Papafragou, Anna. (2016). Children's derivation of scalar implicatures: Alternatives and relevance. *Cognition*, 153, 6-18.

Stiller, Alex, Goodman, Noah, & Frank, Michael C. (2015). Ad-hoc implicature in preschool children. *Language Learning and Development*, 11, 176-190.

Class 8: Collectivity, Distributivity

Syrett, Kristen, & Musolino, Julien. (2013). Collectivity, distributivity, and the interpretation of numerical expressions in child and adult language. *Language Acquisition: A Journal of Developmental Linguistics*, 20, 259-291.

Syrett, Kristen, & Musolino, Julien. (2016). All together now: Collectivity, distributivity, and the semantics of *together* in child and adult language. *Language Acquisition: A Journal of Developmental Linguistics*, 23, 175-197.

Musolino, Julien. (2009). The logical syntax of number words: Theory, acquisition, and processing. *Cognition*, 111, 24-45.